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AESTRACT

The 1968 booklet, a report by the National Advisory Committee on Mexican American Education, contains a brief description of the problems facing more than 5 million Mexican Americans in our society. According tc the report, the failure of education has been the failure tc recognize the needs cf Mexican American students; this is evidenced by their high dropout rate. The report also notes that, because of the language barrier and the lack of suitable instruments to test the intelligence and the learning potential of Mexican American children, they are labeled as "mentally retarded" (e.g., in Califcrnia, Mexican American students account for more than 40% of the so-called mentally handicapped). Included in the booklet is a section entitled "Blueprint for Action," which lists 11 suggesticns for working tcward sclutions to the problems of educating Mexican American children. (EJ)

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THE MEXICAN AMERICAN: Quest for Equality

A Report by the National Advisory Committee on Mexican American Education

1968

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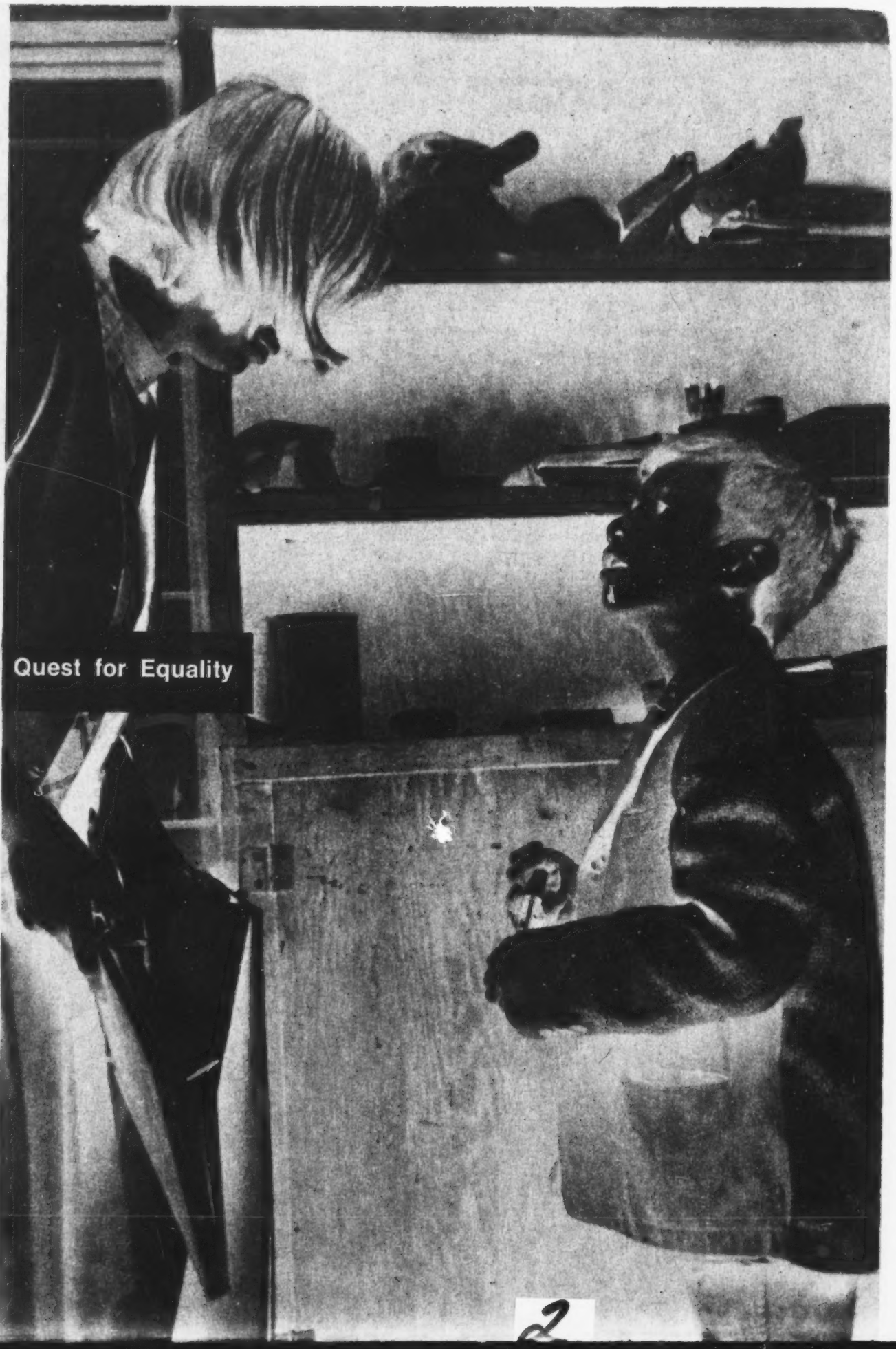

THE MEXICAN AMERICAN: Quest for Equality

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A WASTE OF HUMAN RESOURCES

Failure to provide education to hundreds of thousands
shameful waste of human resources. The melting pot
climate in which all citizens are accepted on the basi

Educators, especially, must search their consciences
society acceptable in America?

Never before has the need for equal opportunity for a
greater need of equal educational opportunity than th

The National Advisory Committee on Mexican American Education was created to advise the
opinions expressed in this, the Committee's first report, are those of the Committee and do no

education to hundreds of thousands of people whose cultural heritage is "different" has resulted in
human resources. The melting pot ideology that we speak of so proudly has not produced a moral
all citizens are accepted on the basis of individual worth.

ally, must search their consciences for an answer to the question: Is only a monolingual, monocultural
e in America?

the need for equal opportunity for all Americans been so sharply put into focus. And no group is in
qual educational opportunity than the Mexican American.

merican Education was created to advise the Commissioner of Education on the education of Mexican Americans. The
t report, are those of the Committee and do not necessarily reflect the official view of the U. S. Office of Education.

THE MEXICAN AMERICAN: HOW HAVE WE FAILED HIM?

There are more than five million Mexican Americans in the United States, 80 per cent of whom live in California and Texas. Most of the other are found in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico, Illinois, and Ohio. In excess of four million of these people live in urban areas.

The Mexican American is the second largest minority group in the United States and by far the largest group of Spanish-speaking Americans. The fact that most of them have learned Spanish as their first language and that millions are not fluent in English makes them no less Americans. Their interests, attitudes, and aspirations differ little from those of other Americans.

Yet they have been denied the opportunities that most other Americans take for granted. Suffering the same problems of poverty and discrimination of other minority groups, the Mexican American is additionally handicapped by the language barrier. The typical Mexican American child is born of parents who speak little or no English, and thus Spanish becomes his only language. When he reaches school age, he is enrolled in a public school where only English is accepted. Bewildered and ashamed of his "backwardness," the Mexican American child is quickly discouraged and drops out within a few years, enlarging the ranks of the uneducated, unskilled, and unwanted.

Let's look at some shocking statistics.

- The average Mexican American child in the Southwest drops out of school by the seventh year. In Texas, 89 per cent of the children with Spanish surnames drop out before completing high school!
- Along the Texas-Mexico border, four out of five Mexican American children fall two grades behind their Anglo classmates by the time they reach the fifth grade.
- A recent study in California showed that in some schools more than 50 per cent of Mexican American high school students drop out between grades 10 and 11; one Texas school reported a 40 per cent dropout rate for the same grades.
- Mexican Americans account for more than 40 per cent of the so-called "mentally handicapped" in California.
- Although Spanish surnamed students make up more than 14 per cent of the public school population of California, less than ½ of one per cent of the college students enrolled in the seven campuses of the University of California are of this group.

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These facts give tragic evidence of our failure to provide genuine educational opportunity to Mexican American youth; and today there are nearly two million of these children between the ages of 3 and 18.

It can't be said that nothing has been done for these youngsters. The Federal Government, through the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), has given a good deal of financial aid to schools for the purpose of improving the education of Mexican Americans. Although a few millions of dollars have been spent, hundreds of mililons still need to be spent — and for hundreds of thousands of Americans it is even now too late. State and local agencies have spent respectable sums of money — and even more energy — in behalf of the Mexican American but none has given the problem the really massive thrust it deserves.

Money is only one problem. Perhaps an even more serious one is the problem of involuntary discrimination — that it, our insistence on fitting the Mexican American student into the monolingual, monocultural mold of the Anglo American. This discrimination, plus the grim fact that millions of Mexican Americans suffer from poverty, cultural isolation, and language rejection, has virtually destroyed them as contributing members of society.

Another problem is that we have not developed suitable instruments for accurately measuring the intelligence and learning potential of the Mexican American child. Because there is little communication between educators and these non-English speaking youngsters, the pupils are likely to be dismissed as "mentally retarded." Common sense tells us that this is simply not so. The chasm that exists between the teacher and the student in the classroom is even wider between the school and the home, where there is virtually no communication. Such lack of understanding soon destroys any educational aspiration the pupil might have or that his parents might have for him.

SIX CRITICAL ISSUES

The Committee believes there are six critical issues in the improve

Issue No. 1: The existing educational pr
and demand serious evalua

Issue No. 2: Instruments are lacking for
Americans.

Issue No. 3: A very small per centage o
actually enroll.

Issue No. 4: Legal restrictions in various

Issue No. 5: There is an exceedingly hig

Issue No. 6: Society has not recognized,
school environment.

here are six critical issues in the improvement of Mexican American education:

sue No. 1: The existing educational programs for the Mexican American have been woefully inadequate and demand serious evaluation.

sue No. 2: Instruments are lacking for measuring intelligence and achievement potential of Mexican Americans.

sue No. 3: A very small per centage of Mexican American students who could qualify for college actually enroll.

sue No. 4: Legal restrictions in various states discourage instructions in languages other than English.

sue No. 5: There is an exceedingly high dropout rate of Mexican Americans in public schools.

sue No. 6: Society has not recognized, or at least accepted, the need for a multilingual, multicultural school environment.

HOW CAN WE ATTACK THE PROBLEM?

The Mexican American Affairs Unit of the U. S. Office
educational success of the Mexican American:

1. Preparation of teachers with the skills necessary t
manner as to insure success. This includes bilingu
2. Instruction in both English and Spanish so that the
pupil learning a second language, and then using
in all curriculums, and at all grade levels until the
language.
3. Instruction to preschool Mexican American pupils s
place with others by the time they enter school.
4. Complete programs for adults in both basic educat

The vehicles for achieving the foregoing imperatives

1. Teacher preparation: Educational Personnel Devel
2. Bilingual education: Title VII, ESEA, Bilingual Edu
3. Early childhood education: Headstart and Followth
4. Adult basic and vocational education: Amendments

VI?

ffairs Unit of the U. S. Office of Education has identified four imperatives for
he Mexican American:

rs with the skills necessary to instruct Mexican American pupils in such a
success. This includes bilingual capability.

glish and Spanish so that the mother tongue is strengthened concurrent with the
nd language, and then using both languages. This bilingual instruction must occur
d at all grade levels until the student is thoroughly at home with his second

ol Mexican American pupils so that they are more nearly ready to take their
he time they enter school.

r adults in both basic education and vocational education.

ng the foregoing imperatives already exist:

Educational Personnel Development Act, Bilingual Education Act, Title I, ESEA

Title VII, ESEA, Bilingual Education Act

ation: Headstart and Followthrough, Title I, ESEA

tional education: Amendments to the 1963 Vocational Education Act

BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION

Once we have faced up to the critical issues and recognized the imper

GENERAL

1. We must immediately begin to train at le administrators.
2. We must make use of current knowledg programs that promise learning success
3. We must agitate for priority funding by t immediately.
4. We must see that testing instruments are achievement potential of the Mexican A
5. We must promote programs to assist st in languages other than English.
6. We must help the various states to reco
7. We must provide asistance, through Fe education.
8. With the leadership of the Federal Gove programs, to equip the Mexican America our economic society.
9. We must encourage parental involvemen
10. We must encourage state and local educ personnel on their staffs.
11. We must foster a joint effort of the Feder materials that are designed expressely

ecognized the imperatives, the Committee recommends specific action on several fronts.

y begin to train at least 100,000 biluingual-bicultural teachers and educational

of current knowledge and encourage further research to assist in creating educational ise learning success for the Mexican American.

priority funding by the U. S. Office of Education to develop educational programs

esting instruments are developed that will accurately measure the intelligence and al of the Mexican American child.

rograms to assist state legislatures in taking the necessary action to permit instruction an English.

arious states to recognize the need for statewide programs in bilingual education.

sistance, through Federal funds, to Mexican American students in pursuit of a college

of the Federal Government, we must increase the adult basic education and vocational the Mexican American adult with skills and knowledge necessary to become a partner in ty.

parental involvement programs at the state and local levels.

state and local education agencies to use more effectively the Mexican American affs.

int effort of the Federal Government and private enterprise to produce instructional designed expressely for Mexican American students.

FEDERAL LEGISLATION

1. Increase the funding of Title VI minimum of $100 per child for re
2. Increase the funding of Headsta financial base to meet the neds o programs.
3. Continue the present funding lev
4. Continue Title VII, ESEA, as a c Education.
5. Continue Title VIII, ESEA, Dropou by the U. S. Office of Education, a
6. Increase the funding support of Opportunity Grants, by 15 per ce Americans.
7. Establish a Land Grant College, v related to the bilingual-bicultural
8. Amend Title I, ESEA, to permit th whose income may not qualify hi qualify because of cultural attitu

Increase the funding of Title VII, ESEA, to $150,000,000 for the year 1970, to provide a minimum of $100 per child for relevant educational services for the Mexican American.

Increase the funding of Headstart and Followthrough by 10 per cent, to provide a sufficient financial base to meet the neds of many Mexican Americans not presently served by these programs.

Continue the present funding level of the Migrant Education provision of Title I, ESEA.

Continue Title VII, ESEA, as a discretionary program administered by the U. S. Office of Education.

Continue Title VIII, ESEA, Dropout Prevention Act, as a discretionary program administered by the U. S. Office of Education, and increase its funding for 1970 to $50,000,000.

Increase the funding support of Title IV-A of the Higher Education Act, Educational Opportunity Grants, by 15 per cent, to be directed toward college enrollment of Mexican Americans.

Establish a Land Grant College, with specific responsibility for programs and research related to the bilingual-bicultural student.

Amend Title I, ESEA, to permit the use of funds for the education of Mexican Americans whose income may not qualify him, or as more often is the case, whose children may not qualify because of cultural attitudes toward depending on public welfare support.

STATE LEGISLATION

1. Remove legal ba
2. Appropriate and
   Mexican America

ADMINISTRATION — U. S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION

1. Expand the respo
   include all Spanis
2. Continue to press
   personnel in all u
3. Allocate specific
   Mexican American
4. Develop an intens
   American.

1. Remove legal barriers to instruction in the public schools in languages other than English.
2. Appropriate and identify supplementary funds for support of specialized programs for the Mexican American.

OF EDUCATION

1. Expand the responsibility of the Mexican American Affairs Unit of the Office of Education to include all Spanish-speaking programs.
2. Continue to press for employment of Mexican American professionals and supporting personnel in all units of the U. S. Office of Education.
3. Allocate specific funds for determining the most effective direction in research for the Mexican American.
4. Develop an intensive program of information on the educational needs of the Mexican American.

ADMINISTRATION — CHIEF STATE SCHOOL OFFICERS

1. Seek out and employ M
departments of educatio
2. Set up a unit for coordi
for the Mexican America
3. Develop a statewide prog
4. Promote the redirection
bilingual-bicultural progr
5. Promote the increased in
local educational progra

CHOOL OFFICERS

1. Seek out and employ Mexican Americans in policy and administrative positions in state departments of education, and encourage similar programs in local education agencies.
2. Set up a unit for coordinating and encouraging the development and operation of programs for the Mexican American.
3. Develop a statewide program for bilingual education.
4. Promote the redirection of priorities in the use of Title I, ESEA, funds, to focus on bilingual-bicultural programs.
5. Promote the increased involvement of the Mexican American in advisory committees in local educational programs.

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The opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U. S. Office of E

The Southwestern Cooperative Educational Laboratory of Albuquerque, deeply concerned with and de
as well as other Southwestern culturally divergent groups, is pleased to have published this report.

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Albuquerque, deeply concerned with and dedicated to improving the educational opportunities of the Mexican American, s pleased to have published this report.